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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Business Organizations Team Up to Provide Recovery Assistance** *Tropical Storm Gaston Victims Can Find Help at Three New Aid Offices*

*Richmond, Va*—As Tropical Storm Gaston's damage estimates continue to increase for central Virginia, good news and financial help are on the way for victims who are still trying to clean up after the August 30 storm. With the announcement of federal disaster aid being approved for businesses that experienced damage, several area organizations are teaming up to make a difference by opening special assistance offices dedicated to helping businesses apply for aid.

"In the midst of trying to recover and rebuild, applying for aid can be an intimidating process and that's why we want to help," explains Secretary of Commerce and Trade Michael J. Schewel. "The faster businesses and individuals receive aid, the faster we can all recover."

#### **Tropical Storm Gaston Recovery Assistance Offices**

At the three designated assistance offices, Small Business Administration (SBA) trained representatives will issue loan applications, provide information about the disaster loan program, and direct people to the appropriate resources. In order to save time, interested business owners should call ahead to schedule a counseling session.

Businesses:  
Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce's  
Small Business Development Center  
201 E. Franklin Street  
Phone: 804-783-9370  
Hours: 9 am – 5 pm (M – F)

Virginia Department of Business Assistance  
707 E. Main Street, Suite 300  
Phone: 804-371-8200  
Hours: 9 am – 5 pm (M – F)

Families/Individuals:  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
Call to register and request application  
Phone: 1-800-621-FEMA (3362)  
Disaster Recovery Center  
730 E. Broad Street  
Hours: 10 am – 7 pm (M – Sat) & 12 pm – 5 pm (Sun)

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## New Aid Offices, continued

The localities eligible for federal aid to impacted residents and business owners include the cities of Richmond, Hopewell, Colonial Heights, and Petersburg, and the counties of Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Hanover, Henrico, and Prince George.

Assistance can include Business Disaster Loans covering uninsured or otherwise uncompensated losses with interest rates as low as 3.1 percent and terms extending up to 30 years. SBA can provide disaster loans to businesses of all sizes and nonprofit organizations up to \$1.5 million to repair disaster-damaged real estate, machinery, equipment and inventory. Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) are also available to eligible small businesses to provide needed working capital until normal operations resume.

Business owners needing to make an application should be prepared to provide basic information about themselves including name, permanent address, phone number, insurance coverage and any other information to help substantiate losses.

"As organizations dedicated to helping businesses, this is a natural alliance for everyone involved in making the aid process easy," explains Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce CEO Jim Dunn. "Our goal is to help folks get back on their feet and reclaim their businesses and lives by focusing on rebuilding our region. We urge every business owner impacted by Gaston to visit one of these offices as soon as possible."

In addition to visiting the new offices, individuals, families, and business owners in need of flood recovery aid can apply by calling 1-800-621-FEMA or 1-800-462-7585 (TDD) for the hearing impaired, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week. Those making application should be prepared to provide basic information about themselves including name, permanent address, phone number, insurance coverage and any other information to help substantiate losses.

Since 1867, the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce ([www.grcc.com](http://www.grcc.com)) has taken the lead to enhance and institute change in the Richmond Region, making the region an ideal location for businesses to prosper. The Chamber is a catalyst for business development and the voice of business in Greater Richmond. We embrace a regional approach to opportunities and issues; inclusion of all businesses and individuals who have a stake; and the belief that business will thrive in a healthy community with exceptional quality of life. Together with the creative minds in our community, the Chamber has initiated and implemented programs and services that have made significant advances to our region's economy. The Chamber, a not-for-profit business membership association with more than 2,100 members and a professional staff of 40, is a bold business leader that works to ensure that Greater Richmond is easy to

## New Aid Offices, continued

love. Hundreds of volunteers serve on committees and task forces under the leadership of the Board of Directors. For more information, visit us at [www.grcc.com](http://www.grcc.com) or call 648-1234.

The Virginia Department of Business Assistance (DBA) is the state agency devoted to the growth and success of the Commonwealth's business community. DBA provides access to capital, incentives for workforce training and business information and assistance. For more information, visit the [www.dba.state.va.us](http://www.dba.state.va.us) or contact the Virginia Business Information Center at (804) 371-0438, (866) 248-8814, toll free, or via e-mail at [VBIC@DBA.VIRGINIA.GOV](mailto:VBIC@DBA.VIRGINIA.GOV).

For more information regarding SBA's disaster loan program or for a disaster recovery center nearest you visit SBA's website at [www.sba.gov/disaster](http://www.sba.gov/disaster) or call 1-800-659-2955. The hearing-impaired may call SBA via the Federal Relay Service (FRS) at 1-800-877-8339. The filing deadline to apply for loans to cover physical damages is November 2, 2004, and the deadline to apply for loans to cover economic injury is June 3, 2005. SBA Disaster Assistance Office/Area 1 - 360 Rainbow Blvd., South - Niagara Falls, NY 14303.

### **Note to Editors:**

In addition to Beth Simos, the following individuals can be contacted for more information about the new offices or federal assistance programs.

Nina Sims  
VA Department of Business Assistance  
804-371-0371

Perry Pedini  
U.S. Small Business Administration  
716-282-4612

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